

SOCIETY OF THE SACRED HEART
PROVINCE OF INDIA
NEWSLETTER



10th October 2022

NEWS FROM THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY

Gratitude is Life-Giving

Years back, in the late 1970s, whilst I was running up the stairs at St. Margaret Teacher's Training Institute at the Convent of Jesus and Mary, my eyes focused on a frame on the wall with this quote, "Gratitude is the sign of a Noble Soul". Looking back, I now feel that this quote gave a direction to my life.

It is said that gratitude makes sense of our Yesterday, brings Peace for Today, and creates a Vision for Tomorrow. My daily Morning Prayer in silence helps me to stay focused on the Blessings in my life and not dwell on any form of disappointment or sadness. It has helped me to maintain a positive outlook towards life.

Gratitude for the gift of life itself, not taking a single day for granted.

The Covid years were challenging and could have been depressing. At the Ministry level the drop in admissions and the loss of close family members brought their own measure of pain, but I managed to keep my composure and found ways to de-stress through activities that I enjoyed. I watched a good Christmas Hallmark movie, my interest more on the ideas for Christmas decorations, or just listened to concerts of André Rieu, or Andrea Bocelli or just saw a good old mystery movie – a Sherlock Holmes or Inspector Morse series.

Sleep is a very important factor in our life to keep calm and stay functional even in stressful situations. Every Sunday, I sleep in between meals and Community Adoration. My night sleep is not affected by this routine. I sleep as early as 9.00 pm or 9.30 pm and wake up at 5.00 am sharp.

Starting my daily walk again has been equally important for my physical wellbeing.

At present, the Staff and I are at the receiving end of gratitude from the Parents of our Nursery School. Aware of our financial constraints because of Covid, and also of our desire to celebrate our Golden Jubilee, the parents are helping us in every possible way to raise funds for our Sophia Nursery Family Get-together Celebration in December 2022. Their response, "We will do anything for the School, everything you do is for our children!" is well appreciated by us.

I end with another meaningful quote, "GRATITUDE is a Powerful Catalyst for Happiness."

Charlotte Bastion, rscj

My North India Dream

Miraculously healed in 2019 from third stage breast and nipple double cancer, 22 chemotherapies and 15 radiations, I experienced in myself a surge of new life. Bathed in this stupendous, unfathomable spiritual energy, that radiated from this near-death experience, I had the audacity to ask God to fulfill two of my life-time dreams i.e., to go back to America to study Eco-Spirituality and to the Himalayas in North India to say goodbye to Jeevan Dhara Ashram in Jaiharikhal, where my call to Eco-Spirituality had intensified.

Aware that the spiritual way of life is perhaps the most intriguing and enigmatic of all arts and sciences, I knew that I needed to get fired up with the spiritual ideal of choosing what is morally good, socially necessary and traditionally inviolable. I worked hard to gain back my physical energy and prayed unceasingly for my two dreams to become a reality. Deep within, I was confident that



At Rishikesh

truth would triumph, goodness would ultimately succeed and the power of virtue would command the admiration and attract the attention of even the gods! I went to the US in February 2020 and studied Eco-Spirituality. COVID-19 which began in March 2020 did not deter me and *Vande Bharat's* first direct flight from Chicago to Mumbai brought me back safely to India.

Dream one accomplished, I began to have visions of dream two. With limited physical strength and after being housebound for almost two years, I comprehended that human effort and divine grace had to blend in order to make this a possibility. Every day, I began feeling a little

more confident. The silent helping hand of God was seen, when Anila encouraged me to go to Rishikesh. Great energies got gathered up and sympathy and support came from all sides, when Prisca decided to take the PTVs to Rishikesh in May 2022.

Accompanied by Mukta and Shalini, I began the long trip by ordinary sleeper coach on 27th April and reached Haridwar on 29th morning. We then went by bus to Rishikesh and by auto to Tapovan, where Savita and Nithya met us, while Vimala and Josephine were at the door to welcome us. Prisca and Anita Hamsoy joined us the next day. Our week's stay at Rishikesh was very memorable. It began on 1st May with a visit to *Samanvaya* – the CMI regional



The Jubilarians

theologate. Vimala gave us an interesting guided tour of Shivananda Ashram on 2nd May.

On 3rd May we visited the *Vashishta Guha* Cave and on 4th May I had a day of bliss, fasting and praying alone in silence at the Shivananda Ashram. I visited our Tapovan neighbours and reconnected with them on 5th May and on 6th May we all went up to Jaiharikhal. Prisca and the PTVs returned to Rishikesh, while I stayed there for five days.



Nostalgia and ecstasy enthralled me as I dug up the hidden treasure within, in the mine of my inner substance. Everything came alive – the openness and simplicity of Ashram life, without enclosures and with village culture as the social basis. Fr Thomas Kochumuttom CMI, the Acharya of the Ashram, is a holy man and I benefited a lot from his *Pravachans*. I was fortunate to be part of the Silver Jubilee and the Golden Jubilee of Fr Tom and Fr Mathew respectively in the Ashram. I was thus able to meet the priests and nuns of the diocese under one roof! The Lansdowne parish priest took me in his car for his Jubilee the next day, thus enabling me to visit the Holy Family nuns there. I wanted to meet 90-year-old Bishop Gratian Mundadan, formerly bishop of Bijnor; at present he is in Najibabad. Heaven took me there in a jeep. I was happy to talk to him for a long time, hear Mass and pray with him. He does not look his age, is fully alive and active and worthy of emulation! Dr (Fr) Jose arranged a jeep for me to see Najibabad and the ministries there. I visited Prem Dham-Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled, Destitute and HIV+ve. I also visited Sr Pushpa, the hermitess at Laldhang, who wanted to see me. I then went to Bijnor where Bishop Vincent welcomed me with a grand dinner at the Cathedral. I even met and had lunch with the late Shastriji's family. I finally boarded the train for Delhi where my cousins and friends entertained me. What more could I ask God for?



I came back convinced that spiritual life is a journey of faith and purification, leading through death to the Supreme Awakening – the vision of God. My North India trip was a glimpse of this vision. The silent helping hand of God was vigorously active right to the end.

Mudita Menona Sodder, rscj

Ebb Tide at Ostia

Something drew me here today
 Something ... that knew it was dying
 Knew that it was time to die
 Knew that it had to – but didn't want to.
 And if it must, wanted
 The dying to be here by the sea
 Alone.

And now I sit here, at the sea's edge
 Watching the ebbing tide carry away
 The last of the hope, the dream.
 Wanting to stem the life-blood draining out
 And letting it go – sand slipping through
 My open fingers – in the water
 Gently.

And, ebb or surge, the restless waves
 Draw my heart into their yearning
 And in their muted roar still sounds
 "Trust me".

Ananda Amritmahal, rscj

Offering of the Day

The family is a central unit of society at large. Most of our life is moulded by the family into which we are born. Today, many families are at risk and the children suffer the most. Marriage is an event that starts a new family. Now in society we find that many married couples are not happy with each other and they compromise with their commitment, and often have external affairs. Why do I talk about this? In my new ministry, each day, there are one or two students who come to me for counselling. Most of them share about their broken families, a few have issues of low self-esteem, and some are struggling to cope with stress. At times it becomes very difficult to guide them on their family issues.

I visited some families in our Small Christian Community (SCC) as a parish activity. Poverty is another major issue that I came across. The pain of the world around is so much while I enjoy the peace and privilege of religious life. I realized that unless we ourselves go through circumstances that make us experience something of that pain, we will never understand what it means. At the end of the day, when I come to the Lord in the silence of my heart, these are the issues I bring to offer to the Heart of our God. And, together with those, there are the joys of someone coming to say “I feel better after having these sessions with you”. I can only offer all these experiences to the Lord with humility and gratitude.

Deodita Godinho, rscj

Life of Fullness in the Sparks of Joy

John 10:10 - “I have come that they may have life in all its fullness.”

Fullness (in Greek *pleroma*) generally refers to the totality of divine powers. I always believe that God dwells in everything, in everyone. For me, life to the fullest is living out what already dwells inside you. I learnt joy is what dwells in me. It is this joy that helps me to adjust, understand and be available. I understood that without being joyful you can't be either human or divine.

When I left Rishikesh I was sad. There I was in silence, praying to God and then connecting to people from that encounter with God. Now for me, it was going to be moving from the encounter with people to God – a new phase of life. But now, after some months, being with people more closely is my joy: I feel Jesus telling me in the words of John 15:11 “That my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full.”

I am not doing big things, but whatever I do gives me joy. Sometime I struggle but deep down in my heart I know the Lord is with me and He wants me to be happy. As I started working in Sophia College and learning baking, I realized that the fullness of life which dwells in me is joy. As I am learning I find God giving me joy in tiny things. Talking to our sisters, spending time with them, sharing whatever I bake with all my sisters gives me much joy. My bakery classmates are very loving; learning with them is a joy to me. Doing chapel decorations, singing for God, gives me joy and calls me to give my best to God and I try my best.

When I walk along the corridor in the College, girls smiling back and greeting joyfully gives me joy. Greeting all the staff, and sometimes saying to one of them, “Oh, today you forgot to say good morning – was your morning good?” made them smile and feel cared for. One word with a smile can

make much difference to life. One of the staff said to me when I greeted her with a smile, “Looking at your smiling face in the morning makes me feel my day will be blessed”. That touched my heart. What else do I need to be happy and to live a life of fullness?

Recently a tiny bird came to Sister Rajani’s room. Seeing the bird and seeing Rajani’s joyful face doubled my joy. When Queen Elizabeth died, of course it was sad, but I felt blessed that I had seen her on her 90th birthday, almost face to face – that gave me joy. Joy can’t be felt from only external sources, it is filled from within. Looking at the hostelites as I pass through the corridor gives me joy and a sense of belonging, of feeling that they are mine. I find everything happening within me and around me is from God for me. All of creation is a gift of God for me, a gift of the joy-giver. Now even when I do something as simple as gardening, it lifts my spirit with joy. Loving, being kind and welcoming to all, strengthens my relationship with God. Sometime I struggle to understand people not being welcoming and kind and things which are not joyful, but I know God will make a way for me to be joyful with the joy which dwells in me.

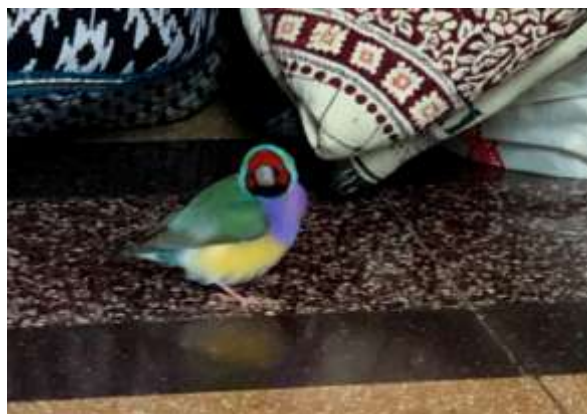
I learn that to find joy in tiny little things is divine. I realize that as a weak human being, I struggle. But continuing to strive to find joy in little things will only help me to grow holy and will prepare me for living in the new creation with our eternally and perfectly happy God. Doing things for God with joy is my fullness of life.

Josephine Pereira, rscj

A Tiny Visitor!!!

On 24th September at around 1:20 pm I had a very unique visitor to my room. It is said, ‘You should expect visitors when you leave the door open’; however, in this case the visitor came through the slit in the shutter. I was working at my desk and suddenly something flew past me!! Within a few seconds I realized that a tiny little bird had flown into my room. This bird is one of the most beautiful birds – Gouldian finch or rainbow finch.

I immediately did a search on Google to find out its name and other details. I learnt that the Gouldian finch is called rainbow finch because of its beautiful plumage with a lovely combination of colours. It is a native of Australia and is an endangered species. In the 1980s it was almost extinct due to extensive capturing. In fact, their numbers had come down to mere 2500. To date it remains endangered and in fear of extinction.



So my little friend must have escaped from its owner’s home!



For a bird brought up in a cage it flew very well and had strong wings. It was surprising to see that it was totally at home in my room, not one bit scared of my presence. For around 4-5 hours it kept me company. It hopped all around my room – on my bed,

under the bed, under the cupboard, on the desk and even got out of my room into the kitchen, but didn't fly away! I walked it around in the community. I even held it in a white cloth in my hand, and took it to the terrace so that it could fly away – but it didn't!!! So back it came to my room and slept for a little while with its head curled down under its wing.

Finally I decided that I couldn't keep it in captivity, it came of its own free will and should go whenever it wanted to. After it had its rest, it flew away!!

It was a happy time. I remember it almost every day. I just hope that it is safe and happy wherever it is.

Rajani Khandagale, rscj